Somewhere to stay

Models addressing homelessness for young people

(England, Scotland, Canada, United States & Australia)

Molly O'Shaughnessy

I am immensely grateful to the Churchill Trust for this opportunity.

I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of Mr Brian Wilson, in memory of Dorothy Wilson, in granting this award.

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Signed: Dated: 2 May 2015

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Introduction

I was lucky enough to be granted the Dorothy and Brian Churchill Fellowship to investigate services addressing youth homelessness in England, Scotland, Canada and the United States.

I selected these destinations based on their similarity of social, political and governmental context, and the location of programs I knew to be examples of good or interesting practice. While I only visited English speaking countries, this was not deliberate.

In all I travelled for six weeks visiting international programs and agencies, spending roughly 3 weeks in the UK and 3 weeks in North America, including the following cities:

- London

- Glasgow

- Aberdeen

- Vancouver

- Portland

- Toronto

This project has given me the opportunity to gain some perspective the progress of work in Australia, as well see some successful and groundbreaking programs, visit some innovative and progressive agencies and meet with some truly inspirational leaders in our shared field.

I currently work as General Manager of Operations at **safe steps** Family violence Response Centre in Melbourne, Australia. I have recently relocated to Melbourne from Darwin where I managed a group of housing and homelessness programs. I previously worked for five years for the Victorian Government in program development and policy.

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1. Executive Summary

Project: Somewhere to stay: Models addressing homelessness for young people

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Project:

This project investigates programs and initiatives addressing homelessness for young people, including crisis accommodation, access to support and links to education and employment. Programs visited included Youth Foyers, policy and funding bodies, peak organisations, supported housing, service partnerships and shelters.

Highlights:

Highlights of this project included visiting integrated education models in Youth Foyers in England and Aberdeen, examples of effective service partnerships in Portland and Toronto, and interesting and innovative larger scale supported housing programs across the United Kingdom and North America.

Lessons:

- Many models of homelessness assistance are driven by tradition and funding structures rather than by best practice and an evidence base
- Conventional house- style models of youth refuge accommodation in Australia cannot deliver broad holistic responses to young people experiencing homelessness, and particularly fail in providing educational, employment and economic outcomes
- Agencies with diverse funding streams and lower proportions of government funding are better able to design services around needs of clients, and adapt quickly to meet changing requirements
- More flexible funding and agreements with less tightly defined specifications can encourage service innovation and growth
- Multi- service, multi- agency and integrated service hubs can be co-located with safe and successful supported housing; larger scale supportive and social housing models can provide better options and a broader range of services

2. Project description

According to census data, youth homelessness in Australia is both underestimated and overrepresented. Children and young people are increasingly the face of Australian homelessness.

- between the 2006 and 2011 Census, the percentage of Victorian children under 12 years who were homeless increased by 14%, and youth between 12 and 18 by 25%

- those under the age of 18 represented 26% of the homeless population, or 5,920 out of the 22,789 homeless Victorians (Australia wide 28,789 children were homeless)

- the total number of children and young people in Victoria on Census night 2011 was 5,920 (Australia wide 28,758)

- 16% or 3637 were children under 12

- 10% or 2283 were youth aged 12 to 18

During the 2006 Census, of the 20,511 homeless Victorians:

- 19% were youth between the ages of 12 and 18 (mainly on their own)

- 14% were under 12, most with an accompanying carer

These figures do not reflect the full picture, as young people who are couch surfing and transient in other ways are not counted.

But how do we address youth homelessness, and why is investment in Australian services failing to decrease the numbers of children and young people affected? This project aims to investigate international approaches to solving the housing instability and homelessness experienced by young people, and to explore models of addressing this issue that may have relevance for Australia.

I have been involved in building, running and delivering Australian youth homelessness and accommodation programs through working in the community services sector in the Northern Territory and Victoria. It is clear that Australian agencies, programs and staff work hard and are committed to achieving positive outcomes for young people. However, it is clear that many of our program and practice models have remained static, decontextualised and resistant to change as policy, politics, and practice have changed around them.

Across Australia, most youth homelessness and accommodation programs have similar eligibility criteria and common features, including:

- providing immediate shelter

- targeting adolescents and young adults when they are more likely to be homeless between the ages of 15 to 20

- employing case workers or 'support' workers who work within the program

Australian program models, particularly those programs established more than 10 years ago, also rest on implicit assumptions including:

- that a young person can resolve homelessness and move within the short time frame of up to three months (the average time for a funded youth refuge accommodation period)

- that a loose replica of the family home, in a suburban house setting with curfews and mealtimes, best supports a young person

- that a generalist case management model which assesses, then addresses, the various problems for the young person workers best

These similarities are not based on a carefully built evidence base but rather on a strong tradition of youth refuge, accompanied by an almost 30 year old funding model which has arguably shaped youth homelessness programs in Australia.

This project investigates whether program models in countries similar to Australia challenge these features and assumptions and offer better – and more successful – examples of practice. I have focused on international programs addressing youth homelessness, including accommodation programs, access to the homelessness system, funding and policy challenges, culture and attributes of agencies doing this work well, and issues for and responses to specific groups.

In visiting the UK, Canada and the United Stated I chose countries and initiatives that are comparable to Australia and Australian models rather than those that are vastly different. I selected programs that:

- link housing to education and employment, including Youth Foyers

- assist young people leaving state care

- assist, with a few exceptions, young people aged 16-25 years

- provide integrated models of accommodation (for instance those that have several different connected housing programs)

- provide medium to long term accommodation (6 to 24 months)

- or provide immediate crisis accommodation

In these programs and countries, I examined:

- accommodation programs

- access to the homelessness system

- funding and policy challenges

- culture and attributes of agencies doing this work well

- issues for and responses to specific groups

The intention of this project is not only to offer a snapshot of how different places and programs aim to address youth homelessness but also to offer recommendations that will inform and frame the discussion on how Australian programs can and should do better.

1.1   Notes on language

<u>The word 'Homeless'</u>

'Homeless' has become a contested word.

Over the years references to a 'homeless person' have been replaced by 'person that is homeless', 'person experiencing homelessness' and more recently by more general references to a person's lack of housing rather than describing the person themselves.

In this report I have used the words 'homelessness' to describe the condition of being without a stable place to stay, and 'homeless' to describe people who are experiencing homelessness. Much literature, including that on Youth Foyers, does not use these words or definitions. I acknowledge that these terms can be problematic and do not provide the most useful, relevant or innovative ways of viewing the problem of being without a house.

In this report I also use the following terms:

- 'agency' to mean either agency or organisation, and have used it to also mean government agencies

- 'service' and 'program' interchangeably

- 'housing sector', 'homelessness sector' and 'youth sector' to describe those funded service areas, funded agencies and workforces in Australia (although there is considerable overlap)

- 'young people' and 'clients' interchangeably to describe those people accommodated or assisted by youth homelessness programs

- 'worker' to mean a person working with young people within a program

These decisions were made on the basis of convenience and clarity of meaning.

3.   F i n d i n g s *(conclusions and recommendations)*

These findings have been structured in the following way:

1. *Policy* – broader level social and political issues
2. *Funding* – commentary related to program funding and associated issues
3. *Program framework* – implications for the development and implementation of programs and practice frameworks
4. *Program model* – detail of program operational implications

2.1   Policy

2.1.1   Impact of housing affordability

While predictable, it is impossible to explore homelessness issues without discussing housing availability and affordability.

Of the cities I visited, London, Glasgow, Vancouver, Portland and Toronto have a crisis of affordable housing, mirroring the issues we experience in Australian capital cities. Increasingly people without an income are forced out of housing, as prices increase. The cost of boarding house and affordable housing accommodation means that it is not accessible to people on benefits or without income, forcing them into social housing or homelessness programs. Lack of available and affordable housing is not the only factor driving increasing rates of homelessness, but is clearly a significant one across the world.

As in Australia, affordable housing strategy is often a national government responsibility in other countries, whereas responsibility for homelessness and housing is usually held at a state or local authority level. This results in a disconnection between the two policy areas, and difficulty linking immediate shelter to any long term housing solution.

Lack of available or affordable housing has an enormous impact on housing and homelessness sector in these places, resulting in:

- increased demand for homelessness accommodation;

- longer stays because there is nowhere for people to move on to, resulting in less people assisted by programs due to of lack of throughput;

- exits from homelessness programs to unsafe housing such as rooming houses; and

- Increased overheads due to rising rent.

2.1.2   Impact of public housing changes

While this project did not focus on changes to public or state housing, changing public housing policy continued to be raised as a significant issue contributing to homelessness throughout consultations.

Public housing that is funded and owned by the state (although rent is usually charged), was once the main safety net for those not able to afford housing. In many countries this is changing due to a range of government policy changes that include:

- governments not increasing public housing stock, while population and demand rises;

- the 'devolving' or handing over of existing stock management to a third party such as a housing association; and

- Increasing limitations on eligibility for public housing as a way of managing demand.

These changes have often accompanied broader housing affordability reforms, however in Canada and the US agencies reported the funding for affordable housing projects has been cut.

These changes seem to have had the most impact in the UK, particularly in England, because of the high proportion of households who live in public or social, housing[1]. Increasingly, the rent model for social housing is run on an affordable housing model where rent is calculated as a proportion of market rent, rather than a public housing model, where rent is a proportion of the tenant's income. For an Australian young person this difference would be dramatic: if living in a one bedroom inner city property worth $280 per week at market rent, and assuming youth allowance is $426.80 per fortnight, this could mean $224 rent per week instead of $64 per week (based on 80% of market rent vs 30% of income).

The impact of public housing changes on the homelessness programs I visited included:

- A lack of affordable housing options, making it difficult for young people to find somewhere to live when they leave a program;

- A direct impact on programs using public housing properties as accommodation, much like Australia's transitional housing programs; and

- Where rental subsidies are used to provide homes people access to private rental (for example in Toronto), concern that landlords benefit from homelessness, where traditionally these state subsidies would have been returned to the state.

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[1] English housing survey statistical data set: Social and private renters, Department for Communities and Local Government, 14 November 2012

2.2   Funding

2.2.1   Advantages of multiple and varied funding sources

Australia is fortunate to have Australian Government funding which, along with state government contributions (more in some states than in others) funds youth homelessness programs almost entirely.

In visiting the UK and North America it is clear that governments provide proportionally less to homelessness program funding than in Australia. While this seems to result in a far less consistent system of services, there are interesting aspects in how agencies respond to less restrictive funding arrangements.

In Australia, funding agreements for homelessness programs are tied closely to specifications, which provide guidance and parameters on how the funding can be used [2]. Specifications for programs can include what sort of staff can be hired and what sort of program costs can be covered, but can also include specific restrictions on who services can be provided for and how much service can be given. For homelessness programs restrictions can include clients' age, services only funded for people in a certain region, number of appointments or number of hours of service. Most importantly, funding is tied to a specific type of service, for example case management for young parents who are homeless, or 12 month transitional accommodation for young people leaving care.

In the UK and North America many of the agencies I visited received less than 60% government funding, with the rest made up from donations and fundraising as well as organisational contributions (such as in the case of Salvation Army programs).

This had a notable impact on delivery of programs, compared to similar programs in Australia. As result of varied and less restrictive funding sources, many of the programs I saw are able to quickly alter or adjust the parameters of their program to meet need, such as changing eligibility limitations (such as extending the age limit to 24 years from 21, when many older young people were using the program), or adding a service that was needed (such as adding a young parenting program and playgroup, or attaching pet kennel to a drop in centre). They were able to maintain less rigid program guidelines, allowing for more flexibility in eligibility criteria, as well as being able to combine funding and programs in interesting ways, such as combining emergency beds within a longer term accommodation program.

I also saw cases where this was the reverse. In Portland, Oregon, where there are a high number of homeless young people, Multnomah County reformed funding in the early 2000's in an effort

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[2] This is an assumption based on my experience of the structure of Australian and State / Territory funded housing and homelessness program funding agreements in the NT and Victoria

to create an integrated system of services[3]. The positive benefits of this were evident, however the rigid guidelines for homelessness eligibility created a service gap.

2.2.2   Regulation or integration through funding arrangements

Young people are often amongst the most vulnerable to the impact of shifting politics and social policy[4]. Changes in government and policy are often articulated in funding arrangements for programs, not only through funding changes, but also through funding agreements and contract arrangements. This impact of changing political environment is evident across the UK, Canada and the US, for both agencies delivering programs and the young people they are assisting. Below are some examples of this regulation:

In the UK, the tougher economic climate and lack of public funds has meant tighter regulation of funding by local authorities. In some local authority areas homelessness funding is now limited to helping those people who originate from that local authority area, or can claim a close connection to the area. This strategy reduces the number of people eligible and manages demand, but makes poor policy sense for programs targeting transient people who are often far from their area of origin.

In Portland, Oregon, programs assisting homeless young people are only eligible to young people who either are in the first days after leaving a family home ('runaway' services) or those young people who can claim to have spent 28 of the previous 30 days sleeping without shelter. If a young person presents requesting help but their number of days spent without shelter is less than this, they are quite literally sent back to the street to build up the required number of days sleeping rough.

However, deliberate shifts in program delivery can also be directed through funding arrangements. Also in Portland, the Oregon Government had rescinded and re-distributed funding for youth homelessness services in the 1990s with the intention of forcing service collaboration. This was executed through partnership and integration being a condition of the restructured funding. It is clear that this has been successful in Portland, with agencies working in partnership to provide different services.

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[3] Home Again: Citizens Commission on Homelessness, A 10-year plan to end homelessness in
Portland and Multnomah County December 2004 https://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/article/103922

[4] A good example in Australia is the impact of benefit changes for young people (proposed in in the 2014-15 Australian budget then reversed) who, if denied an allowance for an initial 6 months after application, would have not been able to access housing programs requiring rent unless they were employed.

2.3   Agencies

2.3.1   Organisational agility

I was often impressed by the stories I heard from agencies about reshaping programs and services in response to needs.   Many of the agency leaders I spoke to talked at length about the importance of responding quickly to shifts, including:

- Preparing for and responding well to changes in funding, including responding quickly and effectively to loss of funding

- Changing the parameters of programs quickly to respond to emerging need rather than waiting for government funding to catch up

- Proactively approaching funding bodies with proposals of how to use funding innovatively or differently to achieve the same goals

- Having the ability to try new things, to shift program parameters and knock down walls as needed

- Having an optimistic organisational culture

These conversations were in different contexts. However, the common theme was that an agency that is successful at what it does, that responds quickly and effectively to the needs of its clients and that can sustain the blows of a constantly changing funding environment is an organisation which is agile.

Factors in creating an agile organisation seem to be:

- Strong leadership, one person's vision

- Having the resources to absorb changes and cuts to funding without an impact on the organisation. Often this meant having a low proportion of government funding

- Looking for the change that's needed, constantly assessing what's working, viewing programs with a critical eye

- Owning the building rather than utilising a government owned facility – particularly in the case of supported accommodation facilities

- Fostering an organisational culture and a staff team who embraced change, and actively recruiting for this quality.

2.4   Program development and philosophy

2.4.1   Conditional support

Youth Foyer programs do not provide unconditional support to young people experiencing homelessness. A key component of the model is that accommodation is contingent on participation in education or employment, and this has been one of the primary criticisms of the model.

For young people this can mean that if their circumstances change, such as escalation in their mental health issues or an increase in their drug use which results in their not attending school or work, they are likely to lose their accommodation at the time when they are the most vulnerable. This has been one of the issues raised by the Australian homelessness sector in relation to adoption of the Foyer model.

This also goes against the tradition of a charity based model, where nothing is expected of the recipient in return for assistance.

2.4.2   Residents' voice in housing and program design

We have not been successful at capturing the voice or the experience of people who use services in Australian program design and implementation. This issue is larger than a lack of government consultation processes and tight implementation timelines. Agencies who act as advocates for the young people who use homelessness services also fail to advocate for this to inform design and implementation processes, and many agencies are active in arguing against such consultation.

I hoped to see some good examples of residents' or service users' participation in program or housing design in the countries I visited. However, I saw very few examples of residents or service users having any meaningful opportunity to contribute. The examples I did see were limited to late stage consultation, anecdotal evidence collected from the staff, or an advisory committee without meaningful input.

The PARC in Parkdale, Toronto, operating on the Clubhouse recovery model, and the Vancouver Foundation Youth Homelessness Initiative demonstrated some progressive and interesting client led systems advocacy. Australian programs could benefit from this model, and take advantage of the opportunities in designing a program to give a meaningful say to those people who will use the services.

2.4.3   Escaping the concept of homelessness

In the course of my visit to the United Kingdom, particularly England, I found people intentionally less likely to use the terms 'homeless' or 'homelessness' than in Australia. Instead, housing programs are described as providing accommodation to people needing housing, rather than as 'housing for the homeless'. People explained that 'homelessness' is a pejorative term and an unhelpful way to construct a service system as it creates false distinctions between different people who need accommodation. Many people I spoke to considered conceptualising 'homelessness' to be old-fashioned and outdated.

There are many positive implications for program provision through making this conceptual shift, including a move toward eligibility based on need rather than based on a problem, alongside a shift away from language that labels and stigmatises people.

However, shifts in terminology often shift thinking in a number of ways. One implication of this change is that eligibility would no longer be based on an assessment of the problem, and instead based on immediate need, regardless of history. If program access was given to people presenting for assistance, rather than an assessment of current homelessness, there would be no impetus for programs to prioritise those people who have a history of being at risk.

There is a risk that removing the term 'homeless' from discussion also limits thinking about homelessness and its meaning. In the UK I was surprised by the high number and visible presence of people living on the street, particularly in cities such as London and Glasgow. When I raised this issue with people working in the housing sector I found that the consistent response was that this was not an indication that the system wasn't working, that many of these people 'chose' to be homeless and that there was nothing the system could do for them.

In Australia, where concepts of homelessness are still central to the provision of housing programs, rough sleepers are generally viewed as being at one end of a wide spectrum of homelessness with housing instability at the other. As someone who fundamentally disagrees with the argument that anyone chooses homelessness, I wonder whether this shift in terminology has had the unintended consequence of further isolating those who experience chronic long term homelessness, and removing them from discourse about housing and accommodation altogether.

2.4.4   Implications of an 'advantaged thinking' model

The practice frameworks that inform youth homelessness programs are most often concerned with trauma, resilience and safety. Assessment of needs or of eligibility for assistance is likely to explore risk, current issues, past history and previous contact with services. In making a decision about whether to accept a young person, an assessment would explore whether that person is in enough need or at enough risk to qualify, and whether there are risks to the program (such as a history of assaults) or risks to the young person (such as a long history of severe substance use). In many cases a decision is made before anyone working in the program meets the young person, or after a one hour assessment[5].

The Youth Foyer movement aims to challenge this philosophy of focusing only on young peoples' previous poor experiences, their problems, their risks and their history. Instead, Foyers have adopted what they call an 'advantaged thinking' model which is based on the young person's positive attributes and potential, or talent, which the program invests in. Interestingly, the

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[5] This is based on my experience of youth homelessness programs and does not reflect the process of all programs.

program is presented to the young person as a deal, where both parties are expected to contribute.[6]

This way of thinking could potentially reform every aspect of the way Australian youth homelessness programs are delivered. In Australia, homelessness services remain strongly connected to a tradition of charity and to the notion of giving to those in need. This is also driven by a strong church based community services sector. The concept of investing in the positive potential of service users to become socially and financially productive members of society could challenge the approach of many agencies and staff.

The positioning of clients as being disadvantaged, underprivileged and tramatised positions the agency that helps them as philanthropic, benevolent, and as the rescuer. If clients are instead viewed as having potential, talent and ability, this re-positions the work of agencies to become facilitators, investors, and enablers of social change, but removes their right to rescue.

An advantaged thinking model also has implications for the homelessness sector itself. Agencies who deliver homelessness programs, who are also often positioned as poor and disadvantaged within the service system, could use this approach to re-position themselves and change organisational culture.

2.5   Supportive / Supported housing and refuge

2.5.1   Crisis – length of stay limitations

For young people in the UK and USA / Canada there is no national systematic response for young people who require crisis accommodation.

This means that young people are often accommodated in a where they are vulnerable (for example where young people are forced to stay in shelters or hostels with older long term homeless adults) and that there is an inconsistency of provision, where one town may have youth crisis accommodation where the next town may not.

In Australia we do have a youth homelessness response that is systematically funded across localities and designed to provide a level of consistency. However this consistency has disadvantages as well as benefits.

Australian youth homelessness programs are usually funded through the Commonwealth Specialist Homelessness Service system as youth crisis accommodation. This funding usually provides for a stay of 6, 12 or 16 weeks (depending on the State) for young people aged from 16 years (15 in some states) to anywhere from 19-25 years.

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[6] Feeling Good: Supporting resilience in young people in Foyers in England
http://foyer.net/files/2013/01/Feeling_Good.pdf

This 6 or 12 week length of service can mean that young people cycle through multiple stays, or leave well before they have somewhere safe to go to. The time limitation seems to be an arbitrary figure based on either an assumed ideal length of stay or a calculation of funding per person. The impact of this rigid funding model is serious for a young person forced to leave a refuge to go to unsafe accommodation, and for programs forced to uphold this length of stay in order to meet their targets and performance requirements, even where they believe it to be poor practice.

2.5.2   Moving out of the 'house'

Refuges in Australia, whether youth refuges or women's refuges, are generally based in a house. Historically called 'safe houses', Australian refuges and crisis accommodation programs are often conceptualized as a communal house or home, and newly designed facilities often uphold this ideal. In part this could be due to the history of youth and women's refuge in Australia, where grass roots programs grew out of suburban houses staffed with volunteers. Now government funded and professionalised, the last vestige of this history could be attachment to the idea of a house.

I found that in the programs I visited in the UK and North America there were few house-like models of accommodation, and generally less interest in 'bricks and mortar' discussion of how facilities are designed.

In Australia 'what size is the perfect size' for a supported accommodation program is a contested issue. Program development and funding bodies wrestle with arguments of number of bedrooms, staff-to-client ratios and efficiency of scale. I found this issue to be less contested overseas. This may be because the crisis accommodation for young people in the UK and North America is not funded as a system. In many places I visited young people needing immediate shelter were housed in the broader adult hostel or shelter system, and referred from there to longer term accommodation.

Another factor could be that the cities I visited have a different housing culture, where stand-alone houses are not an expectation and medium density accommodation is often the norm. Many of the foyers and supported accommodation programs I visited are built on a scale we rarely see in Australia, at 50+ units[7].

In terms of implications for Australia and benefits for the residents, larger facilities:

- Are more efficient to operate, both for governments and for agencies

- Allow for services or social enterprises to be based on site

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[7] Recently there have been many more large developments in Australia, indicating a shift away from this thinking, including the three 40 unit youth foyers and the 65 unit Elizabeth Street Common Ground program in Victoria.

- Better allow for self-contained units

- For young people, can better encourage transition to independence

- Can provide a mixture of both communal and private space

- If well designed, can allow very different programs to use the same space or property. For example, visible community housing alongside medium security safe housing, or crisis beds / child protection contingency beds sharing space with a long term housing program

2.5.3   Coming out of hiding – becoming a community landmark

In Australia the location of youth homelessness programs is usually confidential.

One of the original core principles of the Youth Foyer movement was that the building should be a community landmark, where young people can be proud to say they live. While this is not always possible (depending on availability and affordability of community landmarks) I saw many examples of youth homelessness programs which were a central point of their local communities. These included programs that:

- house a community college

- have social enterprises or services used by the community on site

- deliberately encourage and foster opportunities for the community use their space

This takes the programs and their residents out of hiding, and places them back in the community space.

2.5.4   Length of residency, age limitations, eligibility criteria

As outlined above, Australian youth homelessness programs are usually firmly tied to a tightly specified range of program requirements or specifications, including age eligibility, other eligibility requirements, details of services and support provided and length of stay. In part this is due to programs being mainly funded through one funding stream.

In the UK, US and Canada I saw a number of programs whose criteria and support was more flexible and responsive than Australian programs. In particular, many programs have far more flexibility in length of support. Some supportive housing programs I visited have no specified length of stay, but interestingly still support people on average for one to two years, which aligns with the Australian medium term accommodation period. Other areas of flexibility were age of residents and referral pathways.

2.5.5   Other models to look toward

It is my view that the limitation of Australian youth homelessness program development is its lack of diversity and its strong tradition of a single program model. Integrated models which provide

longer term assistance, are less embedded in problem focused support and which work toward broader outcomes such as educational achievement and workforce participation, such as Youth Foyers, provide a strong example to look to. I believe there is a lot to gain from adopting the Youth Foyer model more broadly, including other sectors, however even strong Foyer advocates would agree that the model is not one size fits all.

Rather than solely focusing on other youth accommodation and housing models, innovation could also be drawn from the following areas:

Public and social housing models which also aim to encourage reconnection with community (which would include school, work and family), and result in sustainable housing. Progressive models of public, social and community housing look toward building sustainable communities through mixing public and private housing, ensuring a diversity of residents rather than only those with complex needs, and encouraging cross generational mixes.

The Clubhouse model: a model of psycho social rehabilitation for people with mental illness which originated in the United States. This model of support, primarily used in day programs and drop in centres, considers its service users as members rather than clients. The Clubhouse model does not provide clinical or therapeutic programs, and focuses on the strengths of the individual, rather than their illness. Members are expected to support the programs through participating, volunteering and contributing, many members go on to become staff members. The PARC (Parkdale Recreation and Activity Centre) in Toronto was a good example of how this model can be used to provide an access point to the homelessness service system and supportive accommodation.

3. Australian Context

3.1   Youth homelessness in Australia

Australia, compared to many countries, has a relatively low rate of homelessness but a relatively high proportion of young people in the homelessness population.

Of the counties I visited, Australia's rate of homelessness is the lowest. These countries, England, Scotland, Canada and USA, all define and count homelessness in differing ways, making more detailed comparison difficult.

Youth homelessness services in Australia are often described as linear – 'continuum' and 'pathway' are words that are often used. However, the pathway provided by homelessness services is often 6 or 12 weeks' crisis assistance; a referral to medium term accommodation of 6 to 12 months' assistance; referral to public housing. This system assumes that particular options are best for young people, and can sometimes predetermine a lifetime in social housing.

Descriptions of Australian youth homelessness programs often describe links to employment and education, and access to sustainable housing options such as private rental, but this is ambitious and often not the reality. So what does an alternative look like, and what are the structural factors that force us to offer a uniform approach that is so transitional?

3.1.1   Why are so many Australian young people homeless

Australia has a high proportion of homeless young people under 25.

There are a number of theories on why this is the case, the main two being:

The comparatively high number of people under 25 in the homelessness system demonstrates that most people who become homeless when they are young don't remain homeless as adults. This statistic shows that most homeless Australians find their way out of homelessness.

Alternatively, this could indicate that Australian systems do not adequately support young people, and in fact make them more vulnerable. In particular, the child protection, youth justice, education and youth homelessness systems are not sufficient to protect young people from falling into homelessness.

3.2   Facts and figures

Homelessness in Australia:

*There are currently **105,237** people in Australia who are homeless.*

Across Australia 49 out of every 10,000 people is homeless, representing 0.5%, or 1 in every 200.

How many of these are young people?

- *Under 12 17% (17,845)*
- *12-18 10% (10,913)*
- *19-24 15% (15,325)*

The largest age demographic is those aged 25-34 18% (19,312)

44 per cent of homeless Australian young people are female

The most common reason cited by young people as the cause of homelessness is family breakdown

There is not consistency across Australia: Victoria has a rate of 42 homeless people per 10,000 people compared with 730 homeless people per 10,000 people in the Northern Territory

While homelessness is on the rise, the proportion of youth homelessness is decreasing - the national statistic for homeless young people between 12 and 18 dropped by 20 per cent from 22,000 to just under 18,000 between 2001 and 2006

States & Territories

NSW	*28,190*	*(40.8 people per 10,000)*	*+20.4% since 2006*
VIC	*22,789*	*(42.6 people per 10,000)*	*+20.7 since 2006*
QLD	*19,838*	*(48.5 people per 10,000)*	*-5.1% since 2006*
SA	*5,985*	*(37.5 people per 10,000)*	*+1.4% since 2006*
WA	*9,592*	*(42.8 people per 10,000)*	*+1.1% since 2006*
TAS	*1,579*	*(31.9 people per 10,000)*	*+32.9% since 2006*
NT	*15,479*	*(730.7 people per 10,000)*	*-7.8% since 2006*
ACT	*1,785*	*(50 people per 10,000)*	*+70.6% since 2006*

Source: Homelessness Australia

Somewhere to stay: models addressing youth homelessness Molly O'Shaughnessy

3.3 Australian young people and homelessness

Traditionally young people have made up a large proportion of the Australian homelessness population. Currently estimated to be 25% of homeless people by the ABS, the group of people aged 12 to 24 years has variously been estimated to be anywhere up to 50%.

There are a number of ways to interpret this statistic. A commonly expressed view is that the majority of people who become homeless when they are young find their way out of homelessness, and so are not represented in the adult homeless numbers. The alternative view is that the systems in Australia that disadvantage young people, such as a poor child protection system, high youth unemployment, and restrictions on young people accessing Centrelink benefits and other social welfare, result in young people being more vulnerable to housing insecurity and homelessness.

3.3.1   Drivers of Australian youth homelessness

There are number of social and economic factors that drive how young people become homeless, and how able they are to find a way out. In social terms the biggest driving factor are trauma, substance misuse and family breakdown (often related to family violence or abuse and neglect issues). Many Australian young people have already experienced significant trauma when they arrive at homelessness.

A Sydney University study[8] found that the four primary pathways to youth homelessness in Australia were:

Pathway 1: Drug and Alcohol with trauma (with or without additional psychological problems)

Pathway 2: Trauma and psychological problems (no drugs or alcohol)

Pathway 3: Drug and alcohol and family problems

Pathway 4: Family problems

Pathway 5: Trauma

In terms of the factors that keep young people in a state of homelessness and prevent their being able to access accommodation, the main issues are:

• Centrelink benefits for young people being difficult to access and insufficient to cover living costs

• Lack of housing affordability in major cities

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[8] Claudine Martijn, Louise Sharpe (2006) Pathways to youth homelessness Social Science & Medicine no. 62

- Inaccessibility of the social and public housing system

- High youth unemployment

- Government and welfare systems: young people who find their way into the youth justice or child protections systems are likely to be severely disadvantaged and experience poor life outcomes overall.

The role of services and staff can often be to assist young people to navigate systems and services, and to find a way around these obstacles.

3.3.2 Australian youth refuge

Australian youth refuge – also called youth emergency or crisis accommodation

Australian youth refuges, or youth crisis accommodation programs, are often based in the suburbs of cities or large regional centres. Many started operation in the 1970s or 80s as a community run initiatives before being funded or absorbed by larger agencies and often now sit within large church-based or community services organisations under community housing or youth and family services.

Program structure: most Australian youth refuges usually have between 4 to 8 bedrooms. Newer large scale facilities may have as many as twelve or more rooms. Usually bedrooms are single occupancy, however some rooms may be fitted to take a young family or siblings. There is often a communal kitchen, a shared living area, and shared bathroom facilities. Some refuges only take young women, or have gender segregated sleeping areas.

Property ownership: most facilities either belong to the state or territory government, or have shared ownership between the government and the agency. Those buildings that belong entirely to organisations are often costly and difficult to operate due to maintenance and facility expenses which cannot be covered by the program funding.

Eligibility: Generally eligibility is based on age from 16 to around 21, although this varies from state to state. It is common for programs to restrict eligibility for young people who are using drugs or alcohol, or who have significant mental health problems.

Most Australian youth refuges are staffed 24 hours. Where this is not the case, the un-staffed period is likely to be during school or business hours, at a time when residents can be asked to leave the property. Generally staff will have a professional background in youth work, social work or community services. Often staff are required to cook and clean, as well as undertaking case work.

Period of support: target numbers for youth refuges are often calculated on % of occupancy and length of support. A youth refuge funded for 13 week support periods will usually need to uphold this time limit in order to meet target number of clients per year. Because of the pressures on the housing system and the need to exit residents quickly, young people are often exited to accommodation where they are technically still homeless, such as insecure housing or staying with friends or family. Many young people are moved to longer term homeless support programs or supported accommodation where they remain in the homelessness system.

3.4   How Australian Services are funded

Australian youth homelessness services are funded in a number of ways. Broadly speaking, most youth homelessness programs are either funded as accommodation providing a bed, meals and support, or as support programs, which provide support without accommodation through a case worker. Other types of funding include:

- Brokerage funding - flexible funds to purchase accommodation, food, emergency relief

- Information and referral – linking young people with accommodation and support services

- Rental brokerage – funds to pay rent, rent debt and moving costs

The majority of Australian youth homelessness services are funded through a single funding stream: Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) funding, under the National Affordable Housing Agreement. This funding, formerly called SAAP funding, is provided by the Australian Government and managed by each State or Territory. There are few services and inconsistent levels of support outside capital cities and regional centres. The Northern Territory has only two funded youth crisis accommodation services, based 1700km apart.

3.4.1   How funding works: Crisis accommodation

Crisis accommodation funding generally funds an accommodation period of 6 to 12 or 16 weeks depending on the State or Territory. For some types of emergency accommodation the period is shorter (such as one to two weeks). Crisis accommodation is usually free, but sometimes requires a rental contribution from residents entitled to benefits.

Once the period of crisis accommodation is over it's expected that the will move on to other longer-term accommodation. Flexibility to extend the accommodation period for people who have no other options varies from program to program.

For young people unable to find longer term housing or to maintain a tenancy, Australian services often see a 'cycling through' of crisis services, where a homeless person accesses one period of crisis accommodation after another to keep a roof over their head.

3.4.2   Medium and long term

Medium term accommodation is usually funded for an accommodation period of 6 months up to 2 years. In the youth sector, this accommodation is usually linked to support and other services including informal education, health and wellbeing. Often this accommodation is run as a supportive community, with residents expected to take part in house meetings and group activities.

3.4.3 Transitional and public housing

In Australia, transitional housing is usually housing of 6 to 24 months in a house or apartment in the community. The tenancy is usually managed by a community organisation. Broadly there are two types of transitional housing:

- Public housing owned by the State or Territory Government, which is delegated to a community organisation to manage as landlord

- Private rental housing leased by a community organisation, which then acts as landlord

Transitional housing has a rental obligation in most cases, usually based on a proportion of income. In an affordable housing model, rent is calculated as a percentage of the market rent of the property.

3.4.4 The current (not a) system

The housing and homelessness system in Australia is often said to be 'fragmented', with young people described as 'falling through the gaps'.

Responses to Australian homelessness have not been designed as a system, and instead operate independently, even within the same localities. State governments have attempted to remedy this is some jurisdictions by funding additional layers of coordination and access, which have added to the number of agencies and responses. The options available to a young person experiencing homelessness are dependent on:

- Their location and whether there are services in their area

- Whether they know where to go to find help

- Whether they are able to access help – speak English, have access to transport

- Whether they are have other problems such as AOD or mental health

3.5 Where are we going?

The most recent Australian homelessness reform, policy shift and associated funding occurred under the Rudd government in 2008-09. This reform consolidated funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement, and also contributed significant new federal funding, matched by each of the States, under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). This was accompanied by the White Paper which set out targets to cut homelessness.

Momentum has significantly shifted since that time. Traditionally Australian governments have viewed homelessness policy as having the purpose of maintaining the services that assist

homeless people. While the 2009 reform made an effort to shift to new ways of working, this has been largely unsuccessful.

The NPAH was implemented in 2009 for a four year funding period, funding new initiatives based on international models including youth foyers, Housing First Models and introduction of Housing Associations. While this looked to be providing a new direction over 2010 to 2012, the funding and enthusiasm for these new models seems to have slowed. Since then the NPAH has been extended a number of times, most recently in 2015 for a two year period. However, other recent developments have included the retendering of social services through the Australian Government Department of Social Services in 2014-15, which significantly reduced funding to homelessness and other services.

While services have remained relatively unchanged there has been a shift in the funding environment. The Australian Government, along with State and Territory Governments, has promoted the following in their funding and contracting arrangements for homelessness services

- Larger organisations, mergers and amalgamations – to encourage efficiency of scale and easier procurement processes

- Partnership through consortiums and subcontracting – to offer a wider variety of services through one funding agreement

- 'integrated' services

- Outcomes based funding – including some fee for service models based on outcomes achieved

- Evaluation as a part of funding requirements

While the NPAH has been renewed, under the 2015 Australian government it seems unlikely that there will be any new funded initiatives addressing youth homelessness in the near future.

In Australia most, if not all, organisations providing large or significant youth homelessness services are almost entirely government funded. Organisations and their services flux with changes of government, changes of budget, changes in expenditure and political focus. Successive governments, both federal and state, have used grant processes to enact social reform agendas, and while many governments talk of forming longer funding partnerships with agencies through long term funding agreements, this has not yet transpired in the area of homelessness services.

4. Youth Foyers

In developing this project, I specifically set out to investigate a number of youth foyers, and to visit the UK Foyer Federation. Before commencing this project I had worked on foyer development projects but have not been an advocate or a critic of the model. Through my investigation I felt inspired and enthused by the foyer programs I saw. I do not believe that there is one single model which can provide every solution for youth homelessness, however the approach of the youth foyer movement provides a step away from the traditional models of service which are prevalent in Australia.

Definition:

The term 'youth foyer' refers to a type of supported accommodation. While use of the term is not regulated, a program is recognised as a youth foyer if it has been accredited by the Foyer Federation, the peak body based in London.

The foyer model aims to address youth homelessness by assisting young people to engage in education and employment, and to reduce their dependence on social services. The aim of a youth foyer is to foster talent and independence in its clients. Employment and education are the core elements of a foyer, along with accommodation, however support is usually provided as well. Participation in education, training or employment is a condition of the accommodation. In this way, foyers are very different from supported accommodation models.

Foyers usually target young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, usually aged between 16 and 24. Youth foyers generally have the following elements:

- On- or off-site education programs

- Self-contained accommodation

- On-site support workers

- Integrated step up models – where a young person can graduate to increasingly independent accommodation

- Music studios, art rooms, gyms or exercise programs

Generally, the youth foyer is located in or based around a youth services hub, so that a young person does not have to seek out support or assistance. Many youth foyers are very visible in the community, as a landmark. Some foyers contain on site social enterprises where young people can work, such as a café, and some have space for external health or support services to be based on site.

I visited the following Youth Foyer programs in England:

- Braintree

- Crewe

- Aldershot Step by Step

4.1 Why Youth Foyers?

It is my view that many of the principles and practice elements of youth foyers mean that they provide a useful model and direction for Australian homelessness services.

4.1.1 Consistency and accreditation

Careful control over the 'foyer' brand, accompanied by support and accreditation, means that there is a high level of service consistency in youth foyers. This differentiates foyers from other homelessness services, where (in Australia) quality of support and accommodation is variable, and dependent on agency, location and funding.

4.1.2 The Deal

Foyers describe themselves as providing a two-way, 'something-for-something' arrangement between the program and the young person, titled The Deal. Along with education / employment, the young person must commit to their end of the bargain in order to retain accommodation. The foyer must provide the necessary support for the young person, for both ends of The Deal to be realised.

The Deal is often arranged through partnerships with employers and colleges, which can enable to program to organise jobs or college places for the young person. This is called The Offer.

This model provides a real and active alternative to charity based models of service delivery, where programs 'do' and young people 'receive'. Foyers also connect with the wider community, and aim for broader, higher outcomes for their clients, such as educational achievement and economic participation.

4.1.3 No disadvantaged thinking

While many programs claim to be 'strengths based', the youth foyer model places this principle at the heart of its practice, through their Advantaged Thinking model. While challenging for Australian services, I believe this philosophy could provide a useful basis for re-conceptualising eligibility for programs and assessment processes.

4.1.4   Australia and Youth Foyers

Youth foyers are a relatively new development in Australia, with the first Australian foyers emerging in around 2001. There is much debate about foyer accreditation in Australia, as successive funders and agencies have claimed to build 'the first' youth foyer. This has resulted in terms such as 'foyer-like'. Australian youth foyers are represented by the Foyer Foundation, the peak body.

5. United Kingdom

5.1   The English context

5.1.1   Public and social housing

In the UK, a significant proportion of the population live in public or social housing, also called council housing. As recently as 2010 this was estimated to be 17% however this is decreasing for a number of reasons. The majority of UK public and social housing stock is owned by local authorities, and of this 60% is managed by external organisations, such as community agencies, and housing associations.

One of the factors decreasing the proportion of public and social housing has been the introduction of the Right to Buy legislation, introduced in 1979, which enables long term tenants to purchase their house[9].

5.1.2   Economic crisis and UK austerity measures

As a result of the recession affecting Europe and the UK in the late 2000s, a range of economic austerity measures were introduced. These measures have had a significant impact on delivery of homeless, housing and other community services. In 2010-11, as part of a range of government savings measures, many of the 'ring-fencing' regulations were relaxed for the grants given to Local Authorities. This meant that Local Authorities had the authority to move funding within their budgets, and according to many working in the homelessness sector in the UK, resulted in funds being moved out of housing and homelessness.

5.1.3   Supporting People funding

The Supporting People funding and accompanying framework was introduced in the UK in 2003. This funding, which funds supported housing, care leavers, drug treatment, and a range of other

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[9] English housing survey statistical data set: Social and private renters, Department for Communities and Local Government, 14 November 2012

services, had amalgamated several previously separate funding streams, with an additional significant investment. It became the single funding source for many UK organisations which had previously been funded through a number of streams. The Supporting People funding in comparable with Australia's Specialist Homelessness Services (previously SAAP) funding. Supporting People funding is managed entirely by Local Authorities.

Since 2011, Local Authorities have been required to make enormous cuts to their annual budgets as a result of the economic crisis, and this has led to Supporting People funding being dramatically reduced. In some areas it has been reduced by over 60% and some Local Authorities are in the process of phasing the funding out altogether. This has meant that many smaller community services have been forced to close.

5.1.4   Housing Benefits

In the UK, unlike the Australian supported housing model where rent is charged, housing benefits are charged by and paid directly to the organisation. This then forms a portion of the operational budget for the programs. I was told by program staff that while this model works well for programs, eligibility for supported housing based on housing benefits means that there is a significant disincentive for young people to work or seek employment, as it often means that they lose their accommodation.

5.1.5   Access to services

Access to services is usually via the Local Authority offices in England. For some Local Authorities, people are only eligible for assistance if they can prove a connection to the local area. This way of managing demand is difficult when trying to provide help to homeless people, and inappropriate for a transient population who often cannot prove their connection to any locality.

5.2   Related Policy - England

5.2.1   No Second night out policy

The No Second Night Out policy, introduced in London in 2009, aims to prevent new rough sleepers from spending a second night on the streets[10]. People without shelter are identified through a range of measures including assessment centres and assertive outreach, and assisted to accommodation. Additional capacity, including emergency beds, is also funded under this initiative, which has now been expanded to all Local Authority areas.

5.2.2   Bedroom tax

The under-occupancy penalty (also popularly known as the bedroom tax) is a reform implemented in 2012 under the British Welfare Reform Act. The penalty applies where a social or public housing tenant has a room in their house deemed to be "spare", or unused. For instance,

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[10] UK Policy Matters: No Second Night Out, May 2014

where a couple occupy a two bedroom housing estate property. The penalty is enacted through a reduction in Housing Benefit, resulting in tenants needing to pay rent on the bedroom or face rent arrears and potential eviction. The lack of social housing and rental accommodation often means that single bedroom properties are unavailable, so the penalty unfairly affects single people forced to rent two bedroom properties. The penalty reportedly also unfairly affects people with disabilities, and encourages overcrowding.

5.3   The Scottish context

The UK has been experiencing economic recession since 2008. Scotland has been significantly affected by the economic downturn which has resulted in high unemployment and government austerity measures since 2011.

Impacts for the homelessness sector have included:

- Cuts to core funding

- An increase in the number of people seeking assistance from homelessness services

- Lack of pathways out of poverty and homelessness for young people

- Lack of economic and employment opportunities for young people

- In some cases, an impact on upkeep of facilities

- An impact f number of housing projects being funded

Reportedly, a number of smaller agencies have been forced to close or merge due to cuts to services funding.

5.3.1   Glasgow

As the only city in Scotland with a population of over a million, Glasgow is more affected by city issues than other parts of Scotland. This includes the effects of gentrification and rising real estate prices, urban pockets of extreme disadvantage, drug and alcohol issues, as well as the advantages of an inner-city centre.

5.4   Related Policy – Scotland

Overall, the policy and funding context in Glasgow and Scotland diverged from the policy directions I saw in London and England. The 'bedroom tax' had been scrapped by the Scottish Government, and the funding environment seemed to be moving at a faster pace, albeit in the wrong direction.

In the interviews I had with agencies in Glasgow, the single strongest theme was the cuts to funding, including cuts to service funding and cuts to housing benefits. Cuts were related to the impact of austerity measures on the city councils, particularly in Edinburgh and Glasgow, who have been forced to find significant savings within their budgets. The people I spoke to also expressed a lack of optimism about any improvement in the future.

However, despite a gloomy financial outlook, some significant policy reform has been enacted in the housing and homelessness area.

5.4.1   Homeless Task Force and the right to accommodation

In 2003 the City of Glasgow commenced the Hostels Decommissioning and Reprovisioning Programme, with the aim of dismantling the city's short term hostel and shelter based homelessness system, based on large scale shelters offering single night dorm style accommodation to street sleepers. The funding was to be rescinded and reutilised to fund longer term models of homelessness supported assistance. In closing the hostels, alternative accommodation arrangements needed to be made for every resident which delayed the project due to lack of housing options.

The recommissioned system included:

- A single point of access and assessment
- A range of smaller scale support services with accommodation
- Some intensive support for particular groups, such as young people transitioning from care
- Employment and training services

The Hostels Decommissioning and Reprovisioning Programme was implemented and managed by the City of Glasgow, who remain heavily involved in the development and delivery of all Glasgow homelessness funded programs.

While many of the newer services are reportedly a success, the City of Glasgow has apparently found the increasing number of people falling into homelessness following the economic crisis difficult to manage through the single access point, and are currently developing a short term shelter hostel-like model, replicating the previous system.

5.4.2   The Aberdeen context

The third largest city in Scotland, Aberdeen is a small remote centre in Northern Scotland with a harsh climate. Its economy is heavily dependent on the oil and gas industries, creating the parallel economies also seen in Perth and Darwin: temporary Aberdeen residents from elsewhere in the UK or Europe working in the resources industry are paid a high salary and often a housing subsidy, driving up the living costs of the small city. Meanwhile, many long term Aberdeen residents are unemployed or have a low income, and are increasingly unable to pay the rising rent and food costs. This has an impact on the housing and homelessness sector.

5.4.3 Aberdeen Foyer

The Aberdeen Foyer is one of the largest and best known foyer programs in the world, and has strongly influenced the development of foyer programs in Australia. The Warrnambool Foyer and the three recent Victorian foyer developments have all drawn from the Aberdeen model.

The Aberdeen Foyer model consists of the following service components:

- A central college. The Aberdeen College, based in a large former school, houses all of the Foyer's education and engagement activities including school education, accredited VET style and adult education, non- accredited education, community programs, activities, a music studio, art programs, social enterprises and traineeships. All activities of the Foyer are linked to the college.

- Three large Aberdeen supported housing programs, consisting of self-contained units and on-site support and services, and three regional programs working on the same model.

- In total, there are 80 units of accommodation with tenancies of up to 2 years.

Aberdeen Foyer had been adversely affected by the cuts to the Supporting People funding, as this funded the organisation's case management support. However, because the Foyer did not rely on this funding alone, and also drew some of its base funding through fundraising and social enterprises, the cuts had not had a significant impact on programs.

Unlike many foyers, Aberdeen College is not co-located with accommodation. However, it is within a few blocks of two of its supported accommodation programs. According to managers this is not a serious barrier, but accommodation on site or next door would be preferred.

6. North America

6.1 Integrated and step up models

The North American homelessness sector and landscape is characterised by high proportions of street homelessness over other types of homelessness, street drug markets and transient street culture. Unlike Australia, both the UK and North America

Across Canada and Portland the unifying themes of youth homelessness accommodation included:

- Step up models of support and accommodation, encouraging transitioned independence

- Access to services and support provided through drop-in and day programs, targeting street sleepers

- Large multi service agencies offering a wide range of responses

Cost of living and housing affordability, particularly in Canada, continued to be both a driver of housing instability, and a factor having an impact upon services. Funding and policy issues were more diverse than in the UK, due to a different political system where financial control lies with the State, County or City Government.

6.2 The Vancouver context

Vancouver, on the West coast of Canada, is picturesque with a (relatively) mild climate. While overall it is a pretty and affluent city, one of the most noticeable features of Vancouver is a highly visible large number of homeless people. The part of the city known as Downtown Eastside is confronting in its number of people sleeping on the street. The area, unlike the rest of Vancouver, shows signs of urban decay and is notorious for its street drug market and high crime rate.

I was told two stories about why there are such high numbers of homeless people in Vancouver, neither of which I could verify. The first is that, because of its mild climate and lifestyle, Vancouver attracts homeless and transient people from all over Canada. The second was that other cities, namely Toronto and Edmonton, give homeless people one way tickets to Vancouver in order to 'clean up' their streets. However data and anecdotal reports from program staff suggest that many of the homeless people they see are born in Vancouver.

Vancouver also has a high cost of living, low rental vacancies, lack of any affordable housing and a large international population.

6.2.1 Covenant House Vancouver

Covenant House is a church based homelessness assistance agency, which interestingly is less than 10% government funded. All but one of its programs were started without state funding, and

the organisation continues to fund itself through fundraising activities. The government funded the organisation does receive is not recurrent, but is also not tied to a specified funding agreement, and is operational funding.

Covenant House accommodation programs include:

- Two crisis accommodation programs with a total of 54 beds (30 for males and 24 for females – the programs are gender based) offering young people immediate assistance including food, clothing and support, as well as health assistance
- A 44 bed transitional housing program

Neither program has a limitation on length of stay, however according to staff the average length of stay is one to three months for crisis accommodation, and one year to 18 months for transitional accommodation, which aligns with funded accommodation periods in Australia.

Prior to segregating the two sites based on gender, female residents made up only a fraction of the young people Covenant House accommodated each year. They received very few female referrals and those young women who were accommodated were sometimes the only female in a floor of 24 or 30 young people. The organisation made a strategic decision to try to better reach this population and built the female-only shelter based on a 'build it and they will come' approach, which was successful.

6.3   The Portland context

Portland is a small city in the Pacific North West, known for its liberal politics. Portland has a significant and visible street homeless population, based in the central business district. Makeshift camps have developed on some disused sites in the city, with people living in temporary dwellings and tents. I chose to visit Portland due to its partnership and collaborative models in youth homelessness services. In particular, I studied the Portland Youth Homelessness Partnership, consisting of the agencies New Avenues for Youth, Janus Youth Services, the Native American Youth & Family Centre and Outside In.

In 1998 Multnomah County, who fund homelessness and housing services, reconfigured youth homelessness services to try to create an integrated service model through existing funding. This model, titled the Collaborative Youth Homelessness Continuum, was implemented through funding regulation and requirements. The new reconfigured funding agreements enforced service collaboration and partnership. While it was reported that this new system was not well received at the time, all partners that I interviewed agreed that it had resulted in better outcomes for young people

6.3.1   New Avenues for Youth

New Avenues for Youth is one of the primary youth services in Portland, offering a range of programs aimed at young homeless people. Interestingly, the agency's main activities are access to immediate material aid and support through drop in centres, which also act as access point to support services and the agency's own supported housing, as well as two alternative schools – run by the city's education department - which target this same group of young people.

The Day Service Centre is a drop in day program available to young people who have been sleeping on the street for 28 of the past 30 days. It provides meals, showers, laundry facilities, as well as activity based programs. Each young person is provided with a case manager who oversees their care and contact with the service. Because of the large number of services provided by the agency, many options are available to young people.

The Transitional Housing program is a 24 bed supported accommodation program, available to young people who are engaged in education, much like a youth foyer model. The program itself does not have some of the foyer-like features such as collocated services or on site programs. The agency also offers a range of other programs such as mentoring, independent living, foster care and employment and training.

Programs for young people experiencing homelessness are split into two categories:

Programs for homeless youth, who are eligible if they have been sleeping on the street for 28 of the past 30 days, as above, and programs for young people who are newly homeless. These are the only two criteria of eligibility, so a young person who is transient but not street sleeping would not be eligible, nor would a young person who has been in and out of homelessness for many months without an extended period of street sleeping.

6.3.2   Janus Youth Programs

Janus Youth Programs is a large agency operating in Multnomah County and Washington State. Along with child protection programs, out of home care, youth justice and youth detention programs and teen parenting support, Janus also delivers a large number of homelessness programs for young people, which include:

- Single point of access and entry to homelessness assistance

- Street outreach

- Two 30 bed youth crisis shelters

- Supported medium term accommodation, supported accommodation for pregnant and parenting young women

- Housing brokerage programs

Janus Youth Programs' 'youth runaways' services are aimed at those young people who are newly homeless, whose pathway is intended be a return home or protective services rather than into chronic homelessness. These programs include group homes and a reception centre.

6.3.3   Outside In

Outside In operates as a youth service centre co-located with a large community health centre.

Outside In targets young people who are homeless and who also have more serious support needs including mental health or substance use issues. Because of the on-site health services, young peoples' more complex support needs can be met. The Centre houses a range of programs for young people including supported secure self-contained accommodation, a 'school' education program, and linked transitional houses in the community.

Social enterprises, run by the organisation, are available off site.

6.4   The Toronto context

Toronto, the largest city in Canada, is situated on Lake Ontario and has a cold climate. Weather is a significant issue for those people who are sleeping on the street, as average low temperatures are below freezing for four or five months of the year. Toronto is a large city of over 4m people, with a large and comprehensive homelessness sector. The housing and accommodation system is based on a combination of large scale shelters, accessed one night at a time, supportive medium term and long term accommodation, limited public and social housing, and housing access programs delivered through subsidies. Reportedly, these subsidies have resulted in the creation of a boarding house system of low cost rental accommodation.

Toronto also has a visible street homelessness population. Many of Toronto's homelessness services are closely linked to mental health support. Like Australian cities, Toronto has very little affordable housing, which has reportedly increased the number of people seeking support from homelessness agencies.

6.4.1   Housing First

The Housing First model is the single strongest model of practice in Toronto housing and homelessness responses.

Originating in in New York in the 1990s the housing first model is a recovery based model of housing. With its origins in mental health, it focusses on immediately moving homeless people into permanent housing. Supports and wraparound services are then provided once the person is housed. The main principle of a housing first approach is that people are only able to recover if they are housed[11]. In Australia, historically people with serious mental health or drug and alcohol

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[11] The Homelessness Hub

problems were expected to seek treatment while still homeless before being housed. In some cases this model persists.

The Housing First philosophy has been adopted in many countries as principle of good practice for assisting homeless people. In Canada in particular Housing First is seen as a core philosophy of service development.

In practical terms, a Housing First approach would mean that a young person would be given immediate housing if assessed as homeless, and would not be forced to move, and would be granted their tenancy for as long as they wanted and could pay for it. This is in conflict with Australian youth housing funding models, which all dictate a length of tenancy.

It is my view that a Housing First approach is entirely appropriate for a person of 40 or 50 years old who has experienced chronic homelessness. However it is less clear that this approach is right for young people.

If the purpose of youth housing services is to offer young people without families or social supports the opportunity to transition to living independently in a 'normal' way, then this approach doesn't achieve this aim. In Australia it is not normal for a 17 year old to be granted their own sole tenancy and expected to stay indefinitely. Transition and transience is a usual part of Australian adolescence, where a typical adolescent's housing experiences might include living with parents until late teens or early twenties, share housing with friends, or accommodation on university campus. Importantly, this young person would have choice of the length of their tenancies, and retain the option of moving back to their parents' house if things go wrong.

6.4.2 Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness

The Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness is a partnership of organisations and individuals with the shared goal of ending homelessness in Toronto, and providing better housing, housing support and services. Members include advocacy groups, funders, service deliverers and people with lived experience.

6.4.3 Fred Victor

Fred Victor is a large, multi-service agency based in Toronto, providing housing, homelessness programs and other support. The Executive Director, Mark Aston, chairs the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness.

Their programs include:

- Affordable Housing: a 76 unit 'affordable housing' facility. Unlike Australian affordable housing models, this program provides immediate ongoing accommodation to rough sleepers, with 24 hour support provided on site. The development is in a prominent and visible location in the centre of the city.

- Transitional Housing

- Two supported housing programs (total of 80 units) for families with children

- Two emergency shelters (total of 114 beds) open 24/7

- Drop in services

- Health services

- Day programs

- Mental health and justice programs

7. Issues raised

Through visits to agencies and programs, a number of questions and issues were raised, outlined below.

7.1 Program issues

7.1.1 Community connectedness

One of the features of Australian youth homelessness programs, possibly continued through tradition, is the confidentiality of program locations. In many of the international programs I saw, external community members were allowed and encouraged to participate. Some programs specifically encouraged non residents on site, through running programs including community education, group or therapeutic programs, funded programs with a different target group (parenting programs, youth justice programs, homework groups) or social enterprises where residents and non-residents worked together.

Many programs also made an effort to be a community landmark, visible and identifiable. One of the original elements of a youth foyer was that a building should be of quality architectural design, so that residents could be proud to live there. The link to architecture has diminished, however the philosophy of being prominent and recognisable remains strong.

7.1.2 Integration of crisis models, statutory beds and other responses / programs

Australian programs rarely mix different target groups of clients under the same roof[12].

Many of the programs I visited provided interesting and useful examples of the ways that different programs can be combined or located together. Some examples of this were:

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[12] There are some exceptions to this rule including the Melbourne Citymission, who provide both youth crisis and medium term accommodation on the one site. Some youth refuges have a dedicated 'bed' for young people under protective orders, however these are usually paid for by Child Protection services and do not provide a separate response.

- Multi-level programs where different floors provided accommodation with differing levels of support. This means that young people can 'graduate' from floor to floor, with increasing independence.
- Foyer programs with supported accommodation for young people under statutory orders placed within them. Some of these young people would then be absorbed into the broader foyer program.
- Crisis beds for people presenting overnight (often adults who are street sleepers) located on site, with separate facilities and entrance, but with the same support and services available.

7.1.3 Integrating other programs and objectives

For the Aberdeen Foyer in particular, success meant having to service the needs of foyer residents, program and community while also running a community college and education and training provision facility.

This created a space where residents' issues and problem were not the core concern of the organisation, however young peoples' needs were still prioritised. Also impressive was the café located at the Crewe Foyer, and the range of programs delivered at Aldershot.

7.1.4 Balanced community

The principle of a balanced community that ensures safety and security of all residents, without creating a culture of 'cherry picking' referrals is a continuing issue for all supported housing providers, including Australian programs. However, when applied to programs with larger communities of residents and longer tenancies, this issue becomes crucial.

While Youth Foyer providers would say that the model can work for anyone, it was clear that the model can work for anyone provided they can live in a communal environment without conflict. Many of the programs I saw had structured non-negotiable guidelines for residents, including some responsibilities for the running of the program or building. Where this was not the case, for instance Outside IN or Covenant House, the programs deliberately targeted those young people at higher risk, and provided less structured programs and formal education.

The principle of a balanced community does not sit easily alongside the principle of equal access. The necessary screening of social ability means that those young people with the most complex problems are often not accepted, and not necessarily appropriate for large scale communal living.

7.1.5 Pets

Many of the programs I visited either allowed for pets, or were able to assist people with caring for their pets.

Pets are a contentious area for homelessness and housing programs in Australia. There are, generally speaking, two arguments:

- Housing and homelessness programs are intended to model the 'real world' of the private rental market or public housing system, where pets are often not allowed. In making allowances for pets, programs are encouraging and assisting in a person's barrier to obtaining or keeping a tenancy.

- Alternatively, pets are therapeutic and should be considered in any recovery based model. Where pets are not allowed or considered, this either creates a barrier for any person with a pet from accessing the program, or forces that person to give up their pet, when this may be one of that person's few connections in the world.

Within the youth housing sector in Australia it is my view that this decision is made, rather on consideration of these two arguments, on the assumption that no homeless or transient young person is able to look after a pet. I disagree with this assumption.

7.2   Funding

7.2.1   Proportion of government funding

Richard Holmes, who I met with at the Crewe Foyer, spoke about agility and ability of services to adapt. The lower the proportion of government funding, particularly in the Australian context where funding specifications are so rigidly defined, the easier agencies find it to alter or adapt program responses. Richard made the good point that an agile service should be able to not only adapt and grow its program structure, unencumbered by constraints of funding agreements, but also change staffing structure quickly and easily, and adapt its building and physical space. He pointed out that because the YMCA owns the Foyer in Crewe, they are able to refit the space swiftly and easily to try new things. This would not be possible in a Department owned facility.

7.2.2   Pooling funding to try new approaches

Similarly, for organisations that have the benefit of donations or other funds outside funding agreements, there is the capacity to pool the funding from smaller programs with these funds to provide a better systematic approach.

7.3   Education

7.3.1   Accredited vs non accredited qualifications

Many Youth Foyers do not offer accredited qualifications as a part of their on-site training, although some are in partnership with a local college to provide training off site.

In youth homelessness programs in Australia there is often a perception that accredited training, or curriculum based training working toward a formal qualification such as year 10 or 12, is 'too hard' for residents. Of the youth supported housing programs I visited, I heard this view echoed by staff. The problem this causes is one of discrimination, where young people are not offered the opportunity to engage in formal education because they are homeless. As educational

achievement is a strong predictor of lifetime outcomes, this means that they are not offered the life opportunities of their peers.

Step by Step in Aldershot had a clear objective to accredit any learning done on site by residents and non-residents though an accredited unit system. Aberdeen Foyer also offers a mix of accredited and unaccredited training.

The most impressive model was provided by New Avenues for Youth, an agency whose services target the most at risk young people who are sleeping rough. New Avenues for Youth partnered with, and is funded by the City's education department to provide an alternative state run schools, both on site (co-located with the drop in centre) and off site in a separate building. Teachers are provided through the city, and the curriculum is designed to allow a pathway back into education.

7.4   Bricks and mortar

7.4.1   What building?

I had expected this program to lead to a series of recommendations regarding the configuration of accommodation and buildings. However, although I asked facility related questions of every interviewee, the program content of the facilities seemed to be a more critical factor in success than the buildings themselves.

Many of the purpose built buildings I viewed were very impressive, however some of the refitted older buildings also provided impressive and interesting residential spaces (a good example is the residential facilities run by Aberdeen Foyer).

7.4.2   Partnerships with housing associations

In Australia, community service partnerships with housing associations are often facilitated by a State Government (for example, the Ladder program in Victoria's alliance with Community Housing Limited). Many of the agencies I visited in the UK had independently developed these partnerships. Because of the system of housing benefits (section 5.1.4) paid directly to the housing provider, rather than rent paid from a renter, housing associations are able to develop a viable business model through social housing.

7.4.3   Rental Subsidies

I was told a number of times that in Canada, new housing and homelessness responses needed to abide by Housing First principles. However, some responses seemed to diverge from a conventional interpretation of the model. The City of Toronto provides a 'housing first' model through a rental subsidy paid directly by the City on behalf of the homeless person to their landlord. This seems to be based on the assumption that rent is the major barrier in chronically

homeless people accessing housing, and that by removing that barrier people will be able to obtain, maintain and retain private rental housing, often without any support provided.

Attachment 1 - Itinerary

2 weeks	London and England
3 days	Glasgow
3 days	Aberdeen
6 days	Vancouver
4 days	Portland OR
2 weeks	Toronto

Attachment 2 - Programme

Foyer Federation	Colin Falconer, Director of Innovation	London, United Kingdom
SAHA (Salvation Army Housing Association), Braintree Foyer	Angie Saunders, Foyer Manager	Braintree, United Kingdom
Crewe YMCA, Crew Foyer	Richard Holmes, Development Manager	Crewe, United Kingdom
Step By Step Partnership, Aldershot Foyer	Sheldon McMullan, Foyer Manager	Aldershot, United Kingdom
Aberdeen Foyer	Ken Milroy, Chief Executive Officer Graham McCulloch, Service Manager	
Refuge UK	Angie Airlie, Manager	London, United Kingdom
City of Glasgow	Bev Walker, Senior Officer Service Planning & Commissioning Team, Homelessness Services	Glasgow, United Kingdom
Catch Scotland	Mark McKinnon, Manager	Glasgow, United Kingdom
Ypeople Glasgow	Sheena McHugh, Operations Manager	Glasgow, Scotland
Glasgow Women's Aid	Susan Jack, Training and Development Officer	Glasgow, Scotland
Care Leavers' Employment Service	Peter Finn, manager	Glasgow, Scotland
Quarriers, Drumchapel Supported Youth Housing Project, What If program	Catherine McLaren Walker, Project Manager	Drumchapel, Scotland
Directions Youth Services, FSGV	John Kehler, Youth Services Team Leader	Vancouver, Canada
Covenant House Vancouver	John Harvey, Program Director	Vancouver, Canada

Vancouver Foundation, Youth Homelessness Initiative	Kris Archie, Project Manager, Youth Homelessness Initiative	Vancouver, Canada
New Avenues for Youth	Sean Suib, Executive Director Leah Breen, Housing Coordinator	Portland, Oregon, United States
Outside In	Heather Brown, Youth Department Director	Portland, Oregon, United States
Janus Youth Programs	Dennis Morrow, Executive Director	Portland, Oregon, United States
Fred Victor	Mark Aston, Executive Director	Toronto, Canada
LOFT Community Services	Terry McCullum, Chief Executive Officer	Toronto, Canada
Eva's Initiatives	Maria Crawford, Executive Director	Toronto, Canada
Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness	Chair, Mark Aston	Toronto, Canada
PARC	Victor Willis, Executive Director	Toronto, Canada
Shelter, Support & Housing Administration, City of Toronto	Alice Broughton, Manager, Community Initiatives	Toronto, Canada

Attachment 3 - Definitions

Advantaged / Disadvantaged thinking	Core philosophies of the Youth Foyer movement, in opposition to the traditional problem- focused deficit models of assessment and eligibility
Care	Young people who are in the care of the state.
Crisis or emergency accommodation	Short term accommodation in a supported housing program.
Co-located	A 'co-located model' of accommodation is one where residents have their own private living spaces and facilities, such as in apartments or units, but these are located on the same block of land creating a community
Communal	A 'communal model' of accommodation is one where residents share communal living areas, and often a kitchen and bathroom. Often it refers to a service based in a house with shared areas. Sometimes residents share bedrooms.
Dispersed	A 'dispersed model' of accommodation is one where residents are housed in houses or flats in the community rather than on one site
Foyer	Originally a French term, this model has been most prevalent in the UK. A Youth Foyer links tenancy with required participation in education or employment.
Foyer Federation	Peak body for the youth foyer movement, located in London.
Funding agreement	The agreement between the government and an agency which outlined services contracted.

Somewhere to stay: models addressing youth homelessness Molly O'Shaughnessy

Hostel – United Kingdom	A large homelessness shelter
Housing association	An agency that manages public housing contracted by the government.
Housing first	A model of housing where long term tenancy is allocated immediately, with other support following. The premise of this model is that people are unable address problems while remaining homeless.
Long term (accommodation)	Accommodation with or without support for a longer period of one year onwards. Some long term housing programs have no tenancy length limitations.
Medium term (accommodation)	Accommodation in a supported housing program for a longer period – usually 6 months to 2 years.
Open talent	A philosophy of the youth foyer movement based on the potential and talent of residents, in opposition to a deficit or problems based model of service delivery.
Public housing	Housing owned by the State
Refuge	An Australian term meaning a small house based housing program
SAAP	Now called Specialist Homelessness Services funding, SAAP was previously the primary funding stream for Australian homelessness programs
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services funding

Tenancy	Period of residency in a house.
Transitional housing	Medium term housing provided through either public housing or leased properties.

Citations and influences

I haven't directly cited their work, however the work of the following people has strongly influenced my views, beliefs and interest in this area:

Dr Shelley Mallett

David MacKenzie

Colin Falconer

Jac Nancarrow